

News Release
U.S. Department of Justice
United States Attorney
District of Rhode Island



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Dog club, former president plead guilty to killing migratory birds

The **Little Rhody Beagle Club, Inc.** and its former president, **William Forward**, pleaded guilty today to illegally killing migratory birds and illegally using a pesticide to kill birds and other wildlife. To protect a stock of rabbits that the club uses to train beagles, Forward and the club used a variety of methods to kill at least 20 protected predatory birds.

United States Attorney Robert Clark Corrente announced the guilty pleas, which Forward and a representative of the club entered today before U.S. Magistrate Judge Lincoln D. Almond in U.S. District Court Providence. Judge Almond fined the defendants a total of \$28,144, ordered restitution to a neighbor of the club whose dogs were sickened, and imposed certain restrictions on the club, in accordance with a plea agreement between it and the government.

The Little Rhody Beagle Club, located at 821 Cowesett Road, Warwick, trains and runs field trials for beagles. The club stocks its grounds with rabbits to use in training the dogs.

At the plea hearing, Assistant U.S. Attorney Terrence P. Donnelly said that the government could prove that, sometime before April 2003, the club and Forward obtained the insecticide carbofuran to address a problem of wildlife preying on the club's rabbits. That wildlife included birds that were protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The Environmental Protection Agency does not allow carbofuran, which is sold commercially as Furadan, to be used against wildlife, restricting its use to protecting crops against certain insects.

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An investigation by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services, the Rhode Island Environmental Police, and the EPA Criminal Investigation Division began after two dogs belonging to a neighbor of the club became sickened in April 2003. Testing revealed that the dogs, which had evidently roamed the club's property before becoming ill, had been poisoned by carbofuran.

On several occasions, investigators found dead bird carcasses on the club's grounds. They also found illegal leghold and snare traps. Video surveillance showed Forward setting leghold traps atop poles that are natural perching places for predatory birds.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Donnelly said that Forward and the club killed at least 15 migratory birds, and other wildlife, with carbofuran, which Forward laced in eggs, squirrel carcasses, and other bait. An additional five birds were either shot or killed by use of the illegal leg traps. Among the migratory birds that Forward and the club illegally killed were turkey vultures, red-tailed hawks, northern flickers, great horned owls, and mourning doves.

Forward and the club pleaded guilty to one misdemeanor count of killing migratory birds and five misdemeanor counts of illegal use of a pesticide. Judge Almond placed both on probation for year, fined Forward \$10,000, and fined the club \$18,145. He also ordered the club to make restitution to the poisoned dogs' owner, who incurred \$1,855 in veterinary expenses treating them. The dogs recovered.

Judge Almond also imposed restrictions on the club and Forward that are in accordance with a plea agreement filed in November. Forward cannot belong to the club for nine months, and cannot hold any office with it for a year. The club's vice president must also resign, and the club is prohibited from having any firearms on its property.

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